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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH								
FROM :	Amembassy DJAKARTA		585 DESP. NO.		This Document must be Returned to the RM/R Central Files			
TO :	THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.		January 6, 1960 JAN 12 1960 Action Taken: 12/15/59 2/6/60					
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SUBJECT: LEKRA, Modern Indonesian Writers and the Campaign Against Western Culture: Views of Herman PRATIKTO, reporter for Nasional (Djogjakarta)

SUMMARY

While in Djogjakarta on November 23, 1959, the reporting officer called on Herman PRATIKTO, an author and a reporter on the Djogjakarta paper Nasional.

Pratikto described the great difficulties Indonesian writers face in getting their works published and said the PKI and USSR had been very successful in exploiting this situation. He felt the United States was potentially in a better position to influence young Indonesian writers, but had unfortunately failed to take advantage of the opportunities. Finally, he expressed the belief that the current campaign against what he termed Western "commercialized culture" might benefit rather than harm the United States.

* * * *

Modern Indonesian Writers

When the reporting officer enquired about PRATIKTO's work, he replied that he was an author at heart. His work as a reporter, he said, was purely in pursuit of a livelihood.

He went on to say that this was the case with nearly all young Indonesian authors. There has grown up an important group of young Indonesian authors in the past two decades. He listed 15 individuals as the most important of the group.* Of these 15, he said, only the first two or three could point to any

* Pramudja Ananta TOER, IDRUS, and Armijn PANE (novelists); Asrul SANI, Waratmo SUKITO, Saju SIAGIAN and Takdir ALI SHAHBANA (essayists); Rivai APIN, Toti BACHTIAR and SIDHARTA (pen name: CLARAKUSTIA) (poets); Rijono PRATIKTO, Abdul MUIS and Utary SONTANI (Short stories); Drs. H.B. YASSIN (critic); and ACHDIAT (general).

POL:DRToussaint;mjs
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significant number of published works. This is indicative not of a lack of works, but of the lack of means to finance publication. The Department of Education and Culture, he said, gives young authors little or no help. Pratikto went on to mention that his was a typical example: he had two books ready for publication now and a third would be ready very soon. Yet, he sighed, it was doubtful that they would be published for a long time. Printing costs were high (Rp 9 per page); when the cost of paper was added, the expense was beyond the means of nearly all writers. No publisher, moreover, he added, was willing to take a chance on an unknown author.

LEKRA and the USSR

It was precisely in exploiting this situation, Pratikto went on, that the PKI and the USSR had been so clever. They realized writers' problems and had stepped in to fill a real need. The PKI, through LEKRA (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat - Institute of People's Culture), for example, offered help to young authors in publishing their works. Just as important, LEKRA provided aspiring authors with the opportunity to get together, exchange ideas and travel about their own country.

Pratikto said that many young authors, including himself, were aware of and thoroughly disagreed with LEKRA's political affiliations. Yet, in the absence of any other organization, authors felt reluctant to pass by the opportunities which LEKRA offered. Obviously, he said, LEKRA was receiving outside financial support — whether from the PKI alone or also directly from Communist China and the Soviet Union, he was not prepared to say.

The Soviet Union, he continued, had also been very clever in exploiting young Indonesian writers. Of the 15 authors cited earlier, he said, at least four had actually gone to the Soviet Union at the invitation of writers' groups or Indonesian-Soviet friendship societies.* Many others had been invited. In addition, the Soviet Union had offered to publish the works of Indonesian writers. He himself had received such an offer through the Soviet Embassy four years ago, as well as an invitation to contribute to a Soviet magazine circulated in Indonesia. He had refused both invitations — but said the temptation was very great.

The United States, he said, was behind the USSR in this field. Why, he asked, does the US not include young writers in the groups invited to the United States. He did not disagree with the idea of sending teachers, newspaper men, civic leaders and the like; but, he said, it is foolish to overlook young writers. After all, he continued, their works (especially if the emphasis on discovering "Indonesian individuality" continues) will constitute the material taught in Indonesian schools in the future. To influence young writers, therefore, is to influence the entire Indonesian

* TOER, BACHTIAR, Rijono PRATIKTO and SONTANI.

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school population indirectly. In competing with the Soviet Union, he emphasized, the United States has many advantages: Most educated Indonesians speak English, few Russian; moreover, young authors going abroad want to meet foreign authors of note — and the USSR has little to offer on this score. The Russian writers read in Indonesia, with the exception of Pasternak, are now all dead, whereas the American authors read in Indonesia are alive and still active.

Of the young writers known to him, Pratikto said, every single one was anxious to go to the United States. If the US could also offer some assistance to young writers in getting their works published, he knew the help would be gratefully received. He realized that such a request was a lot, he said, but felt strongly that if the US fails to offer such help, LEKRA and the USSR would win unopposed.

Campaign Against Western Culture

When the reporting officer asked Pratikto's opinion of the current campaign against certain aspects of foreign culture, he replied that the campaign would not grow any more intense, nor would it be expanded to embrace anything other than "commercialized culture." Actually, he argued, the campaign might benefit the United States. He himself understood why the United States government would never inject itself into the cultural sphere by saying which books, songs, and films might be exported. Nevertheless, in practice, the result in Indonesia has been a flood of films, books and songs which might be commercially profitable but hardly do justice to American culture. If the Indonesian government performs the function of filtering out such "commercialized culture," he concluded, the end result may well be to America's advantage.

Description of Pratikto

Pratikto is about 32 years old, a Roman Catholic, and married with two children. He has never been abroad, but has a keen interest in American literature, in which he seemed very well-versed. He has an excellent reading knowledge of English, but speaks English poorly. He also reads French. He has not received a university degree, but is still attending Gadjah Mada university (Literature Department) on a part-time basis. His wife, also, takes courses at Gadjah Mada on a part-time basis, teaching English at a junior high school in the morning. His clothes and the situation and furnishings of the house indicate a very modest income. His work on the Djogjakarta paper Nasional is mainly concerned with cultural and educational affairs. Suary

Although he is non-party, he said he had heard the Lembaga Kebudayaan Indonesia (LKI), the PNI body set up to rival LEKRA, was going to ask him to become chairman of LKI. He could not decide whether to accept or not.

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The reporting officer found him intelligent, frank, friendly and anxious to expand his contacts with Americans.

For the Ambassador:

Guy A. Lee

Guy A. Lee
First Secretary of Embassy

Action Requested:

Dept pass to:
Bio Division
USIA-Washington
USIS-Djakarta

Cleared in draft: USIS-Djakarta
by Kalish.

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TO :	THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.		January 6, 1960 JAN 12 1960		
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SUBJECT: Conversation with HETAMI, Editor of Suara Merdeka (Semarang); Indonesian Image of America and PKI Strength in Central Java

SUMMARY

During a conversation with the reporting officer, HETAMI (Editor-in-Chief of the Semarang paper Suara Merdeka) expressed the belief that the unflattering image of America held by the average Indonesian had been produced largely by American publications and films distributed commercially in Indonesia. He felt the U.S. government should take steps to ensure that a more favorable image of the United States was presented to Indonesians. In this connection, he thought the Indonesian campaign against certain "excesses" of foreign culture would prove beneficial to the United States.

Regarding political developments, HETAMI said that PKI strength in Central Java had grown consistently since the regional elections of 1957.

* * * *

On November 25, 1959, while in Semarang, the reporting officer had an hour and a half conversation with Hetami, Editor-in-Chief of the Semarang newspaper Suara Merdeka.

The Indonesian Image of America

Hetami, for no apparent reason, launched into a lengthy monologue on the image of America held by the average Indonesian: America is a land of race conflict, pre-occupation with sex, Belairs and unnecessary gadgets, commercialized culture and backward technology (in comparison with the USSR). What other image could there be, he asked, in view of the contents of American publications and films distributed commercially in Indonesia. One magazine produced full-page pictures of negro students being escorted to school by armed guards through jeering mobs of white people; another magazine asked in banner headlines why the U.S. was losing the space race; most films and

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nearly all advertisements in American magazines emphasized unnecessary luxuries and sex. In short, he said, the failures and ugly aspects of American life were stressed, almost to the exclusion of American accomplishments.

Hetami said he had seen America and knew how false this image was. But, he continued, the U.S. government must realize the great damage being done to America's reputation by American publications and films sold abroad. They not only did a disservice to America but also to anti-Communist elements in Indonesia. The U.S. government, he urged, must take steps to ensure that news media give less weight to the shortcomings of American society and more to American successes. The United States must counter the communist technique of the Big Lie with the Big Truth.

The reporting officer argued that the type of governmental interference Hetami proposed would be contrary to U.S. tradition and acceptable to neither the government or information media. Besides, it would serve little purpose for American information media to soft-pedal American mistakes and failures, for the Communists could certainly be depended upon to make up for the difference. Moreover, if an Indonesian newspaper man questioned the accuracy of the Indonesian image of America, it was not out of his power to help remedy the situation. Finally, if it was once generally suspected that the U.S. government interfered, however indirectly, to ensure that only news favorable to the United States was presented in American information media, the reputation of the U.S. government's own information program would suffer considerably. The reporting officer noted that he knew of at least one newspaper (Pikiran Rakyat, Bandung) that faithfully monitored Voice of America and printed news which was broadcast thereon. (Hetami interjected that he knew this was the practice of "several provincial papers.") This was a sign of confidence in Voice of America; such confidence would be undermined quickly if the U.S. were to follow the course suggested by Hetami.

Hetami claimed to appreciate the reporting officer's argument, but was obviously not convinced. He went on to say that perhaps the Indonesian government would aid the United States with the current campaign against foreign culture. If the campaign was limited to such excesses as rock and roll, cha-cha-cha and films featuring thigh-swinging singers — and Hetami was sure it would go no further — the United States stood to gain, not loose.

Political Issues

It was agreed that any detailed discussion of political developments would be reserved until later the same day when the reporting officer and Hetami were scheduled to call on Hatisubeno, the regional head of Central Java. However, during the course of the interview, Hetami expressed the following opinions on political issues:

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PKI Strength in Central Java: As a member of the PNI, Hetami hated to admit it but it was a fact that PKI strength had consistently increased in Central Java since the regional elections of 1957. PNI strength, on the contrary, had declined. He was grateful there would be no general election this year and hoped it would be postponed for "several years." He was convinced the PKI would emerge from an election this year as the largest party, and he seriously feared it might win an absolute majority. There had been signs from Solo in recent months that the PKI was in trouble because it could not make good even a small portion of the promises made during the 1957 elections. He hoped this was the beginning of a general reaction to Communist duplicity, but it was too early to draw such a conclusion. As long as the PKI could draw upon financial resources from abroad, it would be difficult for other Indonesian parties to match the PKI in the fields of propaganda, organization of youth and labor unions. As an example, he cited the 1957 regional election campaigns. In one county alone in East Java (the home of Foreign Minister Subandrio), he said the PKI had spent Rp 700,000 during the campaign. The PNI, on the other hand, had been able to afford only Rp 1,250,000 for all Java.

The PKI was finding itself in an embarrassing position with regard to the government's regulation against alien retailers in the rural areas. The PKI, however, was minimizing the damage to their position by concentrating their protests in Djakarta. In the provinces, including Central Java, the PKI was remaining silent.

Sukarno's Relations with Army and PKI: Hetami expressed the opinion that General Nasution was an extremely able but ambitious man. Sukarno, he said, respected Nasution's ability but feared his ambitions. As a result, Sukarno occasionally turned to the Communists — partly for their support as a counter-balance to Army strength, but even more in order to use their vast propaganda machine to his personal benefit. Sukarno's decision to speak before the PKI Congress in September, said Hetami, was the latest example of such a manoeuvre.

Language Ability of Foreigners in Indonesia

The meeting with Hetami began on a semi-amusing note. Although the reporting officer identified himself as being from the U.S. Embassy, Hetami was sure this was a practical joke and that the reporting officer was in fact from the Soviet Embassy. It was only after the reporting officer produced his identification card that Hetami was convinced of his bona fides. Hetami said his mistake was largely the result of past experience: the Russians he had met in Indonesia had a good command of Indonesian, whereas Westerners, particularly Americans, seemed to consider language ability of secondary importance. The reporting officer explained the Department of State's program for training language and area officers. Hetami was interested but warned that the U.S. would have to move far and fast to catch the Soviets. In this field too, he said, the Soviets had "scored a Sputnik" in Indonesia.

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Description of Hetami

Hetami is of average size and build for Indonesians (5'7"). He wears glasses but appears in good health. He seems about 35 years old, is married and has three children.

He would be a "live wire" in any country and is by far the most energetic Indonesian the reporting officer has yet met. During the interview, which started about half an hour before the paper's deadline, Hetami was frequently interrupted by harassed subordinates needing last-minute guidance. He answered their questions quickly and with assurance, never once losing the thread of the conversation with the reporting officer. He speaks with great energy, conviction and many gestures. He is extremely well-read on American affairs, making frequent and accurate allusions to American history or literature.

Hetami said he had travelled widely — mentioning the United States (3 months to cover the UN General Assembly in the fall of 1957), Western Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Soviet Union (3 months in 1956 at the invitation of Tass). His best language, he said, is Dutch, next English (which he speaks very well), then Indonesian and finally Javanese. His Indonesian is strongly influenced by his knowledge of Dutch and English, and he seldom speaks more than two sentences without reverting to Dutch or English.

Hetami is a member of the PNI and said he served as their campaign manager in the 1955 general elections and the 1957 regional elections. He laughingly described his paper as "non-party," but said it always sided with the PNI. He was born and raised in Solo, Central Java. His parents and several other relatives still live there; his father is an extremely devout Moslem, and a member of the Masjumi party, and chairman of the Batik association of the Solo-Djogjakarta area. To keep his PNI membership from his father, Hetami uses the name Tedjo in PNI circles and publications. He described his father as "uncritically pro-American," especially since his father had met Vice President Nixon during the latter's good will visit to Indonesia.

Hetami gives the impression of being frank, honest and anxious to meet Americans. He appears to be strongly anti-Communist, although not conversely pro-American or pro-West. He hopes to go to the United States in 1960 to attend a journalism seminar at Columbia University, New York.

For the Ambassador:

Guy A. Lee
Guy A. Lee

First Secretary of Embassy

Action requested:

Pass to Division of Biographic Information, USIA-Washington, USIS-Djakarta.

Cleared in draft: USIS, Djakarta by Kalish

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DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. January 6, 1960

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	1-20-60	RM/K-2 IRC-8 P-5 USIS-Djakarta	CIA-10 USIA-10

SUBJECT: Conversation with WONOHTO, Editor-in-Chief of the Kedaulatan Rajkat, Djogjakarta (November 21, 1959)

On November 21, 1959, the reporting officer called on WONOHTO, the Editor-in-Chief of the Kedaulatan Rajkat, the largest daily paper in Djogjakarta, at his office in Djogjakarta.

The meeting was short, as Wonohito was leaving for Surabaya that afternoon to join a group of 10 editors invited by the Indonesian Army to visit Southeast Sulawesi. He was, he said, the only editor outside of Djakarta invited to make the trip. Both the Indonesian and United States governments, he remarked in a semi-jocular vein, seemed to overlook provincial newspapers when it came to extending invitations.

Guided Democracy and President Sukarno

When asked his opinion of political developments since the return to the 1945 Constitution, Wonohito stated that it was really too early to pass judgment. He himself felt the return to the 1945 Constitution and Sukarno's concept of Guided Democracy were needed in Indonesia. Indonesians, he said, were still too inexperienced politically to be able to operate a true democratic government. Among inexperienced people, he continued, guidance from above is welcomed, not resented.

He expressed the opinion that many Indonesian political figures were unhappy with the decreasing influence of parliament, political parties and regional governments -- all of which, he said, was characteristic of Guided Democracy. But he was equally sure, he said, that the average Indonesian did not care one iota about such developments. Indeed, he himself believed that President Sukarno was now more popular among the masses than at any time since 1945-46. Sukarno, he said, had stepped forward to take command at the right psychological moment. The danger, he went on, was that Sukarno's personal command of the government would bring no improvement, in which case there might be a reaction against Sukarno. But, he said, Indonesians are a "very patient people" with a tradition of respect for their leaders; it would, therefore, take considerable time and extraordinary circumstances to make the average man loose faith in Sukarno.

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Description of Wonohito

Wonohito is about 36 years old, of average build, and about 5'7" tall. He is married with several children. He is relaxed and easy-going and appears to enjoy excellent health.

He is apparently very interested in and sympathetic toward the United States. The reporting officer found it difficult to keep the meeting from turning into an interview regarding events in the United States. Wonohito appears very well-informed about American politics and history. He said he had never travelled abroad, but expressed a strong desire to visit the United States.

For the Ambassador:

Guy A. Lee
Guy A. Lee

First Secretary of Embassy

Action requested:

Pass to Division of Biographic Information, USIA-Washington, USIS-Djakarta.

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SUBJECT: Transmission of Newspaper Interview with Ambassador Mukarto

Transmitted as an enclosure to this despatch is a story based on a PIA reporter's interview with Ambassador Mukarto in Washington on December 29. The version as shown here was published in the English language press in Djakarta.

For the Ambassador:

Herman H. Barger
Herman H. Barger
Counselor of Embassy
for Economic Affairs

Enclosure:

Newspaper article (6 copies)

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